

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

Matthew 7:25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Matthew 7:26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Matthew 7:27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Years ago we looked at the property immediately west of the YMCA. There used to be a pretty nice house there. The owner eventually abandoned it and it was vacant for a time until torn down.

The land eventually sold. The buyers had plans to put a storage facility there – like the one just next to it now. But when they got into the permit process they discovered that there used to be a slough running through the property. It had been filled in with junk and not properly compacted. The property was therefore worthless to the new owner.

Jesus uses soil problems to end His sermon. I'm told that in the Holy Land all the sandy soil becomes hard during the dry months. It thus appears solid. Then the storms come and reveal which soil is really just hardened sand and which is bedrock.

Jesus was (and is) addressing His disciples. This last, closing parable is not an evangelistic invitation. It is a call to discipleship and discipline. It is a warning to build on bedrock.

The first thing I notice about the builders in this little parable is that they both used the same materials. We might even go so far as to say that they both built skillfully. The soil is what made the difference.

In the parable it is the **sayings** of Jesus that are the building materials. By that the Lord means these principles and precepts in the Sermon on the Mount. They are the summary and overview of everything He had to say.

One man hears them and does them. The doing of them is what makes his spiritual foundation bedrock. The other man hears them but does not do them. The not doing of them is what renders his spiritual soil sand.

Apparently it is easier than we think to hear God's Word and not do it. James said so in this famous passage:

James 1:23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

James 1:24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

If we are honest we will admit that we hear the Word of God all the time without doing it! Mostly we heed the Word in the biggies: we're not stealing, committing adultery, murdering, etc.

But when we gossip or listen to gossip we are not doers of the Word. When we are judgmental we are not doers of the Word. When we see a need but fail to meet it we are not doers of the Word.

It is, in fact, especially us who are exposed to the Word so much, and hold it in such high regard, that need this warning. We can feel that hearing God's Word and agreeing with it is doing it!

Jesus had just given an amazing talk. In the closing verses of this chapter the hearers are described as astonished. He tells you to put into practice everything you've heard! Don't go away thinking it was something beyond your reach. It is the normal Christian life.

Taking this parable from another angle it assumes that storms will come in their proper season. The Holy Land is to a considerable extent a land of hills and mountains. It is subject to sudden and violent rains. In Jesus' time the Jordan, the principal stream, was annually swollen to a great extent, and became rapid and furious in its course. The streams which ran among the hills, whose channels might have been dry during some months of the year, became suddenly swollen with the rain, and would pour down into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Houses erected within the reach of these sudden floods if founded on sand or on any unsolid basis would not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream would shake it to its foundation; the rapid torrent would gradually wash away its base; it would totter and fall.

So tempests, and storms of affliction and persecution, beat around the soul. Suddenly, when we think we are in safety, the heavens may be overcast, the storm may lower, and calamity may beat upon us. In a moment, health, friends, comforts may be gone.

I'm a big supporter of being ready for the spiritual storms of life! You don't know when they are coming, or with what intensity. But you know they are coming! Regular fellowship with the Lord and with His people is a must. Faithful service is a must. Living the normal, everyday Christian life is a must if you wish to survive the coming storm(s). *being changed to bring change -*

Jesus said of the house that fell that **great was its fall**. This is especially true of believers who seem to be doing OK but are really slacking off spiritually. They are not involved in any particularly heinous sin. They may be indulging some liberty or simply have become apathetic. Suddenly the storm hits and they are not prepared for it. They could have been boarding up their house; sandbagging; stocking up on provisions. But instead they let all that go in order to pursue some worldly endeavor or ambition.

Again I want to emphasize that this is not an evangelistic message. It is a call to discipleship. It's not enough for me to say, "I'm saved and my foundation is Jesus Christ."

My foundation is doing the sayings of Jesus Christ *because* I am saved.

In the end I am expected to see myself in the mirror of this sermon. To the extent my doings do not quite match-up to Jesus' sayings, I am to believe He has empowered me to change.

